

SECTION II

JUNE 13, 2003 WORKSHOP

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The purpose of the first workshop was to identify the priority issues affecting the town center of Ramona, and to identify desirable town center improvement projects in five topic areas: 1) Pedestrian Main Street, 2) Housing, 3) Commercial & Industrial Development, 4) Traffic & Vehicular Circulation, 5) Sensitive Habitats and Civic Amenities. Workshop participants formed five groups, one for each of the five topic areas.

Each group worked through a series of exercises facilitated by a design professional. The first exercise involved a group discussion in which each member submitted three “main issues” related to the topic area. These ideas were compiled on a flip chart and reviewed by the group for common themes. The group then selected from numerous images that reflected possible design solutions for the issues identified, as

well as those that were undesirable for the community. This combined information was utilized to identify several capital improvement projects to address the issues described in each topic area.

A description of the issues that the groups discussed and the conclusions that were drawn are addressed in the subsequent pages. A brief overview of key issues and solutions that arose during group dialogue is also included. Information gathered and decisions made during the workshop on Friday, June 13th are documented verbatim from workshop notes located in Appendix F. However, the workshops were characterized by a cooperative dynamic and lively, fast-paced group exchanges generating a creative synergy that cannot be conveyed solely in a written product.



Group 1: Pedestrian Main Street

RJC Facilitator: Mercy Heath

Group 1 focused on design solutions and capital improvement projects primarily within the Historic portion of Main Street. The concepts and projects discussed in this group were widely agreed upon. The ideas that emerged from the team addressed three general themes:

- Enhance pedestrian-friendliness.
- Improve automobile traffic flow.
- Encourage a dynamic commercial environment.

The team focused on increasing non-motorized access to the town center as well as improving the safety, legibility, and aesthetics of the area for pedestrians. Suggestions for increasing non-motorized access to the area included creating bike paths and racks on D and B streets to support bicycle travel to the town center without detracting from the Main

Street pedestrian environment. Compatible strategies for improving the flow and capture of automobile traffic included increasing local road connectivity and providing parking lots.

Finally, Group 1 suggested a number of actions that could be taken to improve the social and economic aspects of this area. The group also recommended using signage to signify the physical “gateway” of the community and to continue the theme of Ramona’s Historic Main Street throughout other portions of the town center. Other important strategies to increase pedestrian comfort and sense of community included adding street furniture and reducing street noise in order to encourage casual conversation. The group also recommended developing a merchant association in order to generate funds to support these and other capital improvement goals for the area.



Group 2: Housing

RJC Facilitator: Janene Christopher

The Housing “Group” was unique in that it included only one consistent participant the first evening of the workshop. Three additional participants joined the group at various junctures throughout the evening. On the second day, concepts generated by the community member and RJC design staff were shared with the larger group. At this time, all workshop participants had an opportunity to provide additional input and to make comments on housing goals for the town center.

Group 2 established as a fundamental goal that all housing design within the town center must be compatible with the historic character of the area. The group identified several priority housing types and uses for the town center: 1) senior housing, 2) attainable housing, and 3) mixed use apartments above shops and businesses. A range of housing types could support these uses and pricing objectives, including a variety of multi-family homes, cottage homes, or other well-designed developments that support the town center character and pedestrian environment.

The team emphasized the need for enforceable design standards for development of housing within the town center. Important design criteria includes:

- Allowance of three story buildings where determined to be appropriate;

- Use of texture (stone, wood, and rustication) in the exterior building materials;
- Color schemes comparable with those prevalent in Southern California’s natural environment, such as earth tones;
- Application of alternatives to street-facing garages, such as garages on alleys and/ or set back from homes.

Senior housing is a growing need in the community as well as in the region and received particular focus during the workshops. The group determined that it would be most desirable for senior housing to be located nearest to transportation and services, such as within the town center. This would provide opportunities for senior citizens to walk to shopping and services and to utilize pocket parks and other amenities planned for the town center. The safety of senior facilities was a major concern for group members. Several ideas were discussed to address this concern, including the creation of a “senior housing zone” that would concentrate senior housing in a designated area, such as a location currently supporting apartments. After some discussion of this concept, the team decided that creating specific districts for senior housing would subtract from the diversity of the community and from the comfort of seniors. They concluded that ideally, senior housing would be available throughout the

town center and would include home options that would accommodate an array of lifestyles, ranging from larger, multi-story senior housing to apartments above retail stores and cottage communities. As with other kinds of housing, the key to creating desirable, compatible senior homes would come from the application of effective design standards.



Group 3: Commercial/ Industrial
RJC Facilitator: James Robbins

Group 3 worked primarily on Commercial and Industrial land use issues for the Ramona town center. The group concurred on many of the key improvements and design concepts that should be pursued in the commercial districts. Group 3 approached the commercial area as two separate districts, “Old Town” and “New Town”. The team made several recommendations specific to each area.

Old Town

The group recommended the following improvements or additions to commercial areas in historic “Old Town” Ramona:

- Parking Solutions- including shared parking lots, parking districts, and possible diagonal on-street parking.
- Shopping Districts- Shopping districts would be safe and pedestrian friendly. Distinguished districts such as “Old Town” and “New Town” with distinctive themes.
- Mixed Use- Mixed use housing extending several blocks outside of the Main Street corridor (B & D Street) would encourage commercial and professional business development and provide housing variety in that vicinity. This area would support the

improvements to B and D Street and the creation of an attractive and economically valuable alternate route to Main Street.

- Visible Community Identity- Appropriate signage should be utilized to create a navigable, comfortable setting for pedestrians. Highly visible and characteristic signage should be located along Main Street to identify Historic Ramona. Other signs should be stylistically consistent and establish or reinforce a strong sense of place.

New Town

- Mitigate impact of “Big Box” retail and Screen pedestrians from cars by enhancing parking lot landscape buffers- Appropriate treatment would give this district visual continuity and begin to establish it as a place. Landscape buffers and sidewalk treatments could be utilized to make New Town more aesthetically pleasing and more comfortable for pedestrians. Extending the tree colonnade along Main Street was also recommended by the group to achieve these objectives.
- Reduce or eliminate setbacks for new development- businesses with zero lot lines are more accessible to

pedestrians and create a continuous street wall that identifies public space.

- Enhance walkways and trails- Walkways and trails create safe and comfortable travel routes for citizens using non-motorized means of transportation. They could provide pedestrian connections between shopping districts and residential locations throughout the community.

Group 3 engaged in extensive discussion on industrial land, but developed fewer shared recommendations than on the topic of commercial areas. Overall, the group concurred that more industrial land was needed in Ramona. Most of the members of this group achieved consensus regarding the preferred design concepts and location for industrial land. Ultimately there was majority, but not unanimous, agreement on this subject.

The general conclusion of the group was that industrial land would be most viable in its existing location near Olive Street. While the group agreed that industrial land use would ideally occur near the Ramona Airport, the members had concerns about the viability of this option due to

environmental constraints. This concept was ultimately discarded.

Most members of Group 3 felt that additional industrial land was needed to provide opportunities for Ramonans to work within their community. While the types of permitted industrial uses were not discussed at length, the group determined that it would be appropriate to expand the area and allow industrial uses only with approved design restrictions. The group agreed that desirable industrial parks would be “park-like” in appearance and would ideally include recreational features such as trails that could be utilized outside during non-business hours. Key design features for industrial development would include:

- Generous landscaped buffers separating the industrial and surrounding land uses;
- Parking setbacks; and
- Building colors and materials that blend into the natural and built surroundings.



Group 4: Traffic/Vehicular Circulation

RJC Facilitator: Greg Roberson

With limited access and several primary roads functioning at a Level of Service (LOS) F¹, resolving existing traffic issues is considered a critical issue by many in the community. In particular, the County of San Diego along with Ramona residents and an outside consultant team performed a comprehensive study known as the “Ramona Road Master Plan”. Using the Road Master Plan as a foundation, Group 4 developed innovative strategies for creating a well-functioning roadway system that serves motorists, pedestrians, and local businesses.

This group discussed a number of community-wide traffic improvements recommended in the Road Master Plan, including development of the Southern bypass along Dye Road and other connections noted in the County’s Circulation Element such as the connection from Montecito Road to Rangeland Road. Though outside of the village study area, some of these additions and extensions were viewed as alternate route options for reducing the through traffic on Main Street, particularly through truck traffic. Other road additions and improvements were recommended to enhance local road connectivity and re-establish the

historic grid pattern. This would reduce traffic by creating multiple travel routes in and around the town center.

One of the key recommendations of this group was to create a “mini-bypass” around the pedestrian-oriented portions of the town center. This route would allow for vehicle traffic to divert from Main Street onto B and D Street, dispersing traffic and providing an alternate route for some through traffic. This would support traffic calming on Main Street, such as lane reductions, a center median, additional on-street parking, wider sidewalks, and legible pedestrian crossings. The group discussed converting these streets to one-way couplets requiring minimal improvement and no additional lanes. The exact extent of this alternate route was not determined, but the approximate route is shown on the following page in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.

¹ See Ramona Road Master Plan. Available through the County of San Diego Department of Public Works.



Figure 2.1: The suggested location of the Main Street “mini-bypass” as it relates to the greater town center area.

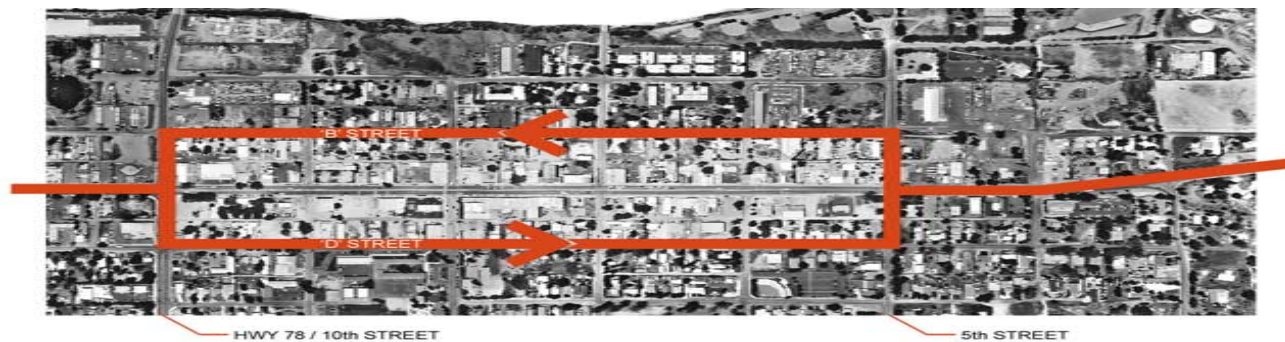


Figure 2.2: Figure 1.2 illustrates the approximate route and direction of traffic flow on the proposed “mini-bypass”. The bypass is proposed with one-way couplets along B and D Streets. It is recommended that this alternative route cross Main Street at Highway 78/ 10th Street to the West and 5th Street to the East.



Group 5: Sensitive Habitats and Civic Amenities

RJC Facilitator: Patricia Trauth

Group 5 focused on sensitive habitats and civic amenities within the town center. The group members felt strongly about non-motorized trails as an important civic and recreational amenity for the community. Specifically, the group envisioned a continuous trail loop extending around the outskirts of the town center and traveling along the proposed Santa Maria Creek (Figure 2.3). In this location, the trail would act as an important component of the Santa Maria Linear Park, a concept strongly supported by the group. This multi-use route would be made up of both pathways and trails at different junctures, in some cases requiring only the improvement of existing trails with fencing and decomposed granite surfaces. The team also recommended additional features such as equestrian crossings and signal improvements designed for equestrians. These amenities were envisioned at the intersections of:

- Main Street & Pala Street
- Montecito & Main Street
- Highway 78 & 10th Street
- 7th Street & Main

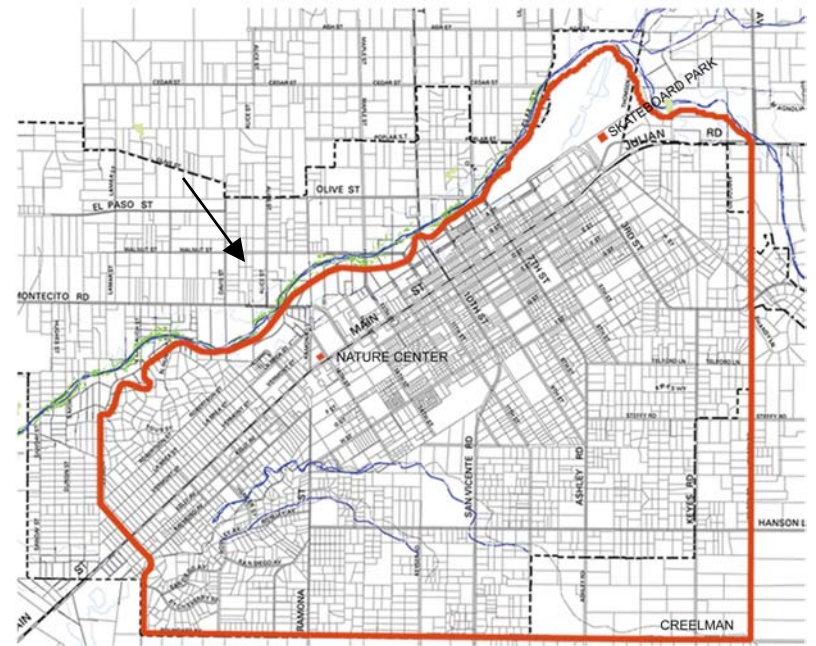


Figure 2.3: Proposed loop trail system.

In addition, an equestrian underpass or bridge at Etcheverry & Highway 67 was discussed as a possible strategy to minimize equestrian and automobile road use conflicts.

The group also agreed that the creation of “pocket parks” was important to support the existing and planned residents in the town center. These small parks would provide peaceful or active outdoor areas for town center visitors and residents to recreate or relax. Group 5 recommended the development of different types of parks designed to address varying community needs. These parks could range from small playgrounds to manicured open space areas with amenities such as trails, benches, picnic tables, and shade trees. A number of sites were identified during the discussions. These locations are described in greater detail in Section II of this report.

Group 5 also discussed important community facilities with medical, social, and educational value to the community. Among the projects considered were an urgent care facility, particularly to serve the senior population in the community. The group talked in detail about the need for improvements to the Town Hall and mechanisms for obtaining insurance coverage for this civic and historic resource. An amenity ultimately recommended by the group was a Nature Center and Vernal Pool Preserve. This educational center would house educational materials related to the native wildlife of Ramona and to the region. It would ideally be housed near a living vernal pool, in order to both protect the pool and provide an opportunity for citizens to observe life within these tiny ecosystems.